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## SOME WAR REALITIES

BY DEMETRIUS BOULGER

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THE United States have now entered the War on the side of Right, and it is my opinion that if it is to be won handsomely and thoroughly as a permanent achievement for the benefit of mankind, it is they who will have to win it. I do not flinch from the logical corollary of that view which is that we were and still are in peril of a peace that would restore the situation to the basis of things prior to August 4, 1914. From such an ignominious peace, which would carry in its womb endless quarrels arising from the shattered confidence of the Allied Nations in each other, it is the privilege as it will be the glory of the United States to save the world.

I am appealing then to the hospitality of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, as an old contributor, to let me say my say unshackled and freely, so that I may bring home to the American people some of the realities of the War upon which they have not lightly, and, I have no doubt, not irresolutely, embarked. These realities will not be found in any official document; they would not come from the mouths of those responsible for the succession of blunders that have marked the British Government's conduct of the war during the last three years—blunders which are still in full swing, and which threaten us with exhaustion by endless repetition. I do not use these words lightly or without a full sense of responsibility. Prussian Germany must be crushed and annihilated. That is not the spirit in which the war has been waged on this side, at least by England. Many public men have stated that the German people, who have perpetrated every outrage under the sun, are good people and that we have no quarrel with them, and these worthy gentlemen in a lofty spirit of complete detachment from the strife add that they look forward to the time when friendly relations will be

restored! That is not the spirit in which such a war as the one in progress could ever be won; those are not the men either to win it or to conclude a satisfactory peace. These views, this spirit of myopic vision, provide the imperative reasons for the United States Government to concentrate its attention on the real and not the side issues of the great struggle, and to bring all its forces to bear on the point where success can alone give a decisive result.

Before proceeding further I must give some credentials to entitle me to a hearing from the great American public. Many years before this World-struggle began—I could quote back to the Venezuela business when the German Emperor commenced his intrigues to raise trouble between the two English speaking nations—I predicted that the United States must and would take part in baffling Germany's design to add naval supremacy to that she had acquired on land. The following extract from an article published in October, 1911 (see *England's Arch-Enemy*) may suffice:

"It is no longer only Europe that has to be taken into account. Do the Berlin Authorities think that America will not have her say in the matter? Distance is being annihilated and Germany flatters herself if she imagines that the United States will stand by while a new aggressive force is brought into being on the Eastern shore-line of the Atlantic. The first naval reverse to England—which has yet to occur—would be the signal for the American battleships to steam for Europe. The German dream of ocean dominion is unattainable. It would be a menace to everybody, and therefore the whole world will combine against and destroy it."

The United States enter the struggle at a moment when the consequences of the numerous mistakes committed would be most visible if they were not covered over as far as possible by official suppression, and if all description and discussion of them were not vigorously forbidden and summarily stifled. Hence springs this appeal beyond the range of official restriction to the English-reading world of free nations. But of all those mistakes the most fatal has been the inability to grasp the main object of the struggle and to concentrate all the Allied forces on its attainment. Thus a large number of minor problems extending to Asia and Africa have been raised to undue importance, and the public mind has been so filled and so disturbed by the multitude of operations undertaken that it is unable to appreciate the

difference between success on the Tigris and on the Meuse, and has forgotten altogether that decisive success is to be obtained only on the Rhine. Successes in many scattered and remote scenes will be of no avail in regard to the main issue, if decisive victory over the chief adversary and criminal is not attained. Only one result can compensate us for all our sacrifices. That is the overthrow and downfall of Prussia. Nothing else will count. If the United States allow themselves to be led away by any lure or appeal from the main purpose and chief justification of this War to side issues they will only add to the prevalent haze in the political atmosphere, contribute another element to the confusion bred of cross purposes, secret motives and fears, and the incapacity to measure rival forces and chances, and in the result they will achieve little or nothing of durable, decisive value. Clear vision, concentration and not dispersion of military and naval power, and finally the iron resolution not to be turned aside by any argument or entreaty, but to go straight for the one main goal, are the requirements of the hour. The war is not to be won at Constantinople or at Trieste, much less in Mesopotamia and Syria. It can only be gained on the middle Rhine.

The first reality that the United States have to confront and reckon with is the true military position in Europe—not the position painted by politicians for the satisfaction, quietude and lightly gained applause of the crowd.

When the war began the Government of Britain was composed of men who, without exception, had gone out of their way on every possible occasion to express their belief in the pacific intentions of Germany. They had cringed to the Emperor William—dubbed the Champion of Peace! They had sent their accredited representative, Lord Haldane, to Berlin to promote an Anglo-German entente; at the Foreign Office they had concluded more than one Convention—drafted and initialled—with the German Ambassador, and if they had possessed the powers subsequently conferred by the Defence of the Realm Act there is no doubt they would have sent every one who disagreed with them, and who strove to arouse the country to the perfidy of Prussia, to prison. Their persistent and systematic defamation of Lord Roberts—a man whose boots not one of them was worthy to unlace—was infamous, and will some day or other when the country realizes the truth be denounced as it de-

serves. The culminating act of their folly was the decision of the Cabinet majority—13 out of 17—on Sunday, August 2nd, to refrain from intervention unless Germany invaded Belgium. She had already broken the neutrality of Luxembourg, but as Bismarck cynically observed in 1867, when the London Convention was signed, “this guarantee at least does not bind any of the guarantors to go to the defence of the Grand Duchy.” Two days later Germany violated the neutrality of Belgium, leaving the most craven no alternative but to act—thus saving the honor of England.

The war began. The Government which had neither foreseen nor provided for it declared “this is our war” and “we intend to conduct it ourselves.” As a matter of fact, they had as much idea of the sort of war that confronted them as any other party of old gentlemen chosen haphazard might have had, and indeed the advantage would have been with the latter, for they would at least have been untrammelled by the speeches and interviews and pledges of the politicians in office. They had amenable to their authority a very fine army, but one of exceedingly limited numerical strength, and they threw it recklessly, heedlessly, ignorantly and piecemeal across the Channel to cope with the unknown. They had no idea of the strength of the forces that were being brought against it. This fatuous self-complacency extended throughout the world of bureaucracy. I speak of what I know when I say that on 17th August the Germans were moving four army corps across the Ardennes—and that was a minor operation—but the intelligence was derided as an invention in official quarters. It was none the less true and the numbers of the corps are now on record for history. So in the same way when General French had 55,000 men at the front behind Mons on August 19th, and only 80,000 in all under his orders on the 24th, the statement was again derided that six army corps were assigned to deal with his army, and as many more to capture Namur and drive the French from Charleroi and the Sambre. The French, too, had only 60,000 men behind the Sambre, and a still smaller force on the Semois based on Sedan and Montmédy. Against these troops the Germans brought fifteen army corps in addition to the Guard corps. It is true that once the French command realized that the main attack was coming from the north and not from the east large forces were massed to cover Paris, and the battles of the Marne and the Aisne fol-

lowed. But none the less it was nothing short of a miracle that the small British regular army was not annihilated in the first stage, that is prior to September 1st, as the German Emperor foreshadowed in his boastful order to Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria.

Notwithstanding this rude introduction to the great struggle the same directors of our public affairs were left to strive for victory and to bring about some sort of resurrection out of the national catastrophe. They had called in Lord Kitchener, and his task was to create a new army out of the Territorial force and all available elements. But he was not merely to provide the means of defeating the enemy, he was also to save the Voluntary system. The word Conscription was a bugbear to the professional politician, and those in office thought more of reserving their Party shibboleths than of defeating the enemy. Lord Kitchener accepted the mission as the servant of the Cabinet, and at the same time he fettered his action by putting on the gyves of red tape that were to prolong the Voluntary system and avert Conscription and compulsion until the eleventh hour, which is proverbially, and was in this instance almost fatally, too late. But at the same time he saw from the start that time would be necessary to give results. He specified three years, but he does not seem to have meant that the War would be over in that period, but rather that his country would then be in a position to take a worthy part in it. But long before that period expired recourse had to be made to compulsion, but here again, owing to Party exigencies and as the price of retaining the Irish Vote, Ireland was exempted from its effect by one of the most discreditable transactions in the history of any Nation. The Empire suffered, but inevitably Ireland herself must suffer most of all from the recoil, for her credit before the Areopagus of the Nations has been lowered, and we of Irish race must writhe under the stigma that Celts could play the game of Teutons instead of seizing them by the throats.

But while the soldiers were content to wait the politicians were not. There was not the requisite number of men, there was not the essential supply of munitions, to drive the Germans out of France and Belgium; but there were ample means available for adventures of the second order in different parts of the world. Here at least it was thought were openings for success that should show what clever people

held places in the Cabinet, and convince the easily gulled and ignorant public that the war was being won. Hence arose the expeditions to the Dardanelles, to Mesopotamia, to Palestine. Here the Turk was the foe, not the German, and of the many stupendous errors made at Whitehall the most stupendous was the inexcusable disparagement of Turkey's military power. On that point I could a tale unfold of ignorant estimates and rash assumptions, but it would serve no useful purpose.

Each premeditated scene of a triumph furnished that of a disaster. That of the Dardanelles and the Gallipoli peninsula can never be described without tears for the brave lives squandered, and execrations for the criminals who sent them to their doom. Nor was the Mesopotamia blunder much less disastrous and wicked. The capture of Bagdad does not wipe out the memory of Kut. Its effect is the less because Bagdad looks as if it too may prove a trap even more fatal than Kut. At any rate success on the Tigris exercises no influence on the progress of the War. The scheme of an Arab kingdom is summer madness, and has directly or indirectly locked up three British armies on the Tigris, at Gaza and at Salonika. There was but one British general to oppose the whole of this Quixotic business, Sir John Maxwell, who rightly declared that the only sound course was to stand on the defensive in the Sinai peninsula, guard the Canal and let the Turks come and turn us out if they could. General Maxwell was transferred from Egypt, which he knew, to Ireland, which he did not know. These proceedings were worthy of the old Aulic Council in Vienna.

When history comes to be written it will be recorded that there was one other soldier who was opposed to all these remote, ill-considered and foolish adventures, but he was not English. Joffre, now Marshal of France, never wavered in his view that the war must be won in Flanders and Lorraine, and that nowhere else could it be won at all.

But it has been said by way of explanation and in extenuation of these errors of judgment that all these operations, lying outside the central theatre of War, are Britain's own affairs, and do not concern her Allies. It was also contended, until events made the plea ridiculous, that they did not affect her fighting strength in Western Europe. These were the side shows that the British Government claimed

the right to allow themselves because they would not detract from the fighting strength in Picardy and Flanders. But this argument collapsed when in November and December, 1915, nine divisions *at least* were detached from General French's army to proceed to Salonika and Egypt, and when twelve months later, almost to the week, five at least were detached from General Haig's forces for the same destination. The side shows, then, have been and are a drain; efficient and valuable soldiers in France have filled the hospitals in the Near East with malaria-stricken victims (euphemistically called sufferers from trench-fever), and the sapping of our power in those directions must continue as long as we cling to the view that the result of the War can be influenced by anything that happens away from the Western Front, taking it at its extreme breadth from Nieuport to Trieste.

Nor should it be forgotten that each man landed on the shores of the Ægean or the Levant represents ten times the effort to deposit him in France—each ton of munitions or stores not less than a hundred times the corresponding effort. And tonnage is scarce and costly. With regard to the Tigris and Mesopotamia the effort was and is still greater, for the men and the stores come from England. Prolongation of these efforts will only raise fresh instances to support the story of the task of Sisyphus. The only chance of averting a catastrophe is to win the war quickly where it can alone be won.

In order to appreciate the realities of the War we must eliminate the unrealities. They are present in every scene outside France and Belgium. If the reader will reflect for a moment he will conclude for himself how largely they have permeated and affected British action from the beginning. Nor have they been confined to the field of arms, although of course it is difficult in such a struggle as the present to draw a clear dividing line between the diplomatic and military operations. The Constantinople affair is a case in point. The British Government agreed with Russia in the time of the ex-Czar to waive its old objections to Russia taking possession of Tsargrad and the narrow straits to the Mediterranean. But it did not bind itself to take Constantinople from the Turks and to present it on a salver at Petrograd. Yet that was what it attempted to do, and it was a just retribution when, by the turn of the political wheel and Czar Nicholas being got rid of, the Russian people ex-



claimed, and very impolitely too, '*We don't want Tsargrad, or, if you prefer to call it Constantinople, at all!*' Greece holds the legitimate claim to the reversion of Byzantium. The German Emperor saw more clearly when spurning the trammels of his Turkish alliance he promised his brother-in-law Tino that this should be his prize and reward. The Turks, like the English, seem rather short-sighted.

But enough of the unrealities of the past, let us turn to the realities of the present and the future. The United States come into the struggle at least with a clear mind and a clean slate. They have the conduct and the experience of the Allies to profit by and to stand before them as a warning. They have had no opportunity to commit any blunders of their own and they should know how to avoid those we have committed. What has been the root cause of those blunders? Underrating the enemy. It will not be forgotten that Germany was to be beaten by 'silver bullets,' that she was to be reduced to helplessness by the want of war necessities and food in the first year despite the most lax blockade that was ever devised by a Foreign Office, and if Germany was to be quickly reduced to dire straits how much worse was the fate pronounced for Austria! Why, she was wiped off the slate in December, 1914, and yet in 1917 she seems as full of vigor as any of the belligerents. And if the Germanic Powers were underrated, how much have calculations been out with regard to Bulgaria and Turkey. Bulgaria has not known defeat and holds much of Serbia and most of Macedonia in her hands. Turkey has provided masses of troops in Europe as well as Asia. They are to be found on the Russian front as well as on the proper boundaries of the Sultan's dominions. I believe that a new army of half a million men is being trained in Anatolia and Palestine to swell the millions already under the Green Flag and the Crescent, and as fighters they are of the best.

Nor is the reality fairly faced in the West. I do not wish to lay too much stress on the evident fact that the line from Nieuport to Belfort is, practically speaking, where it was on January 1, 1915. It has zigzagged a little, and in Flanders and Artois it has in 1917 moved slightly in our favor, but substantially the position is the same. Why is this? The strength of the enemy has been underrated. No military authority has placed it above three and one-half million men in Belgium and Northern France; but my own

estimate is that there are five million Germans between the Channel and Metz, and if this view is correct they have a numerical superiority over the combined Anglo-French armies. It is quite true that behind these men there is now no considerable reserve, and we may assume that the annual contingent no longer provides more than half a million men. Hindenburg's boast that Germany's losses in a year do not exceed the addition gained by increased population is already untrue, and must become more and more opposed to the truth as the struggle continues. Still if on balance Great Britain had a larger untouched reserve than Germany—and this would be made considerable by the prompt application of conscription to Ireland—it is clear that on the side of Germany there are sufficient men to continue the war for as many years at least as it has already been in progress. Nothing but the arrival in Europe of a very large American army by the spring of 1918 can turn the scale decisively and bring the end of the war nearer by several years.

The prolongation of the war has been due to our mistakes as much as to the strength of Germany. But for these mistakes we should have been further advanced towards the end. But for them victory might have been in sight before the collapse of Russia, and the worst military consequences of the Russian Revolution averted. An army that is winning either by its own or its Allies' efforts thinks more of its reputation than one that has to give up ground after immense losses, and that sees no prospect of success before it either directly or indirectly. Of these mistakes not the least glaring have been the dispersal of our efforts and forces, the squandering of first-rate military power on foolish, costly and unsuccessful enterprises, and the complete failure to grasp the true strategical problem set us. No one, not even Lord Kitchener, on our side has revealed the capacity to take a comprehensive view of the War as a whole, and to detect where victory would give the greatest results. Such hosts of armed men never confronted each other before, and yet not a Napoleon of even a minor order of genius has revealed himself.

Such strategical skill and insight as has been displayed during the war have been shown entirely on the side of the Germans. This may be due to the natural and fundamental advantage derived from a single and central control. For the greater part of the War, in fact until the accession of

the Austrian Emperor Charles, the German Emperor was in chief command not only of his own but also of his Allies' armies. They manœuvred and operated to suit his plans and in obedience to his orders. This gave his side an immense advantage; and even now if he has to show more consideration for the needs and more deference for the views of the Hapsburg ruler, he still possesses in the main the central direction and moves the pieces on the board as he chooses. The result is that the German plans have harmonized much more than those of the Allies, and what is most important in the conduct of war, Germany has retained the command of the offensive. It is said that she is now losing it, and it may be true in some theatres of the war, but not in all. What is nearer the truth is to say that she is content to stand on the defensive in the West, while she resorts to the offensive on the Eastern front and in the Balkans. But at any moment she can change her ground. Her capacity to choose her course does not appear as yet to be seriously hampered. In other words, if she does not retain full command of the offensive no one has wrested it from her. Even when the Allies attack it is well known long before the event that the blow is coming, whereas her offensive still retains much of the suddenness and unexpectedness essential to success. The German Powers have the two immense advantages derived from the central position and the central direction of military operations. Nothing has yet happened to diminish those advantages, and every mistake made by their opponents reveals how much they count towards the ultimate decision of the War.

I have written enough to draw attention to some at least of the realities of the struggle which is to be concluded only by the triumph or the ending of all civilization, and therefore I refrain from darkening the picture by referring to Russia. As I never believed in her winning the war for her Allies, and ridiculed at the time the optimistic views of 1914 (how long ago it seems!), that her armies would be in Berlin in a few weeks, her collapse is no great disappointment for me. She may recover to take part in a later phase of the War, but meantime the strain will increase in Western Europe, and the United States must not delay in the dispatch of her sorely needed legions. This brings me to the main point of my argument and the definite purpose that dictates the composition of this paper.

The aid that the United States will send to Europe, whether it be one of a million men or of several millions, will be efficacious in exact proportion to the skill and knowledge with which it is directed. I am not referring to either tactical or strategical problems, but to common sense, and common sense seems from the conduct of the war to be still the rarest of mental qualities. If that force, whatever may be its total strength, is broken up into detached bodies for different destinations, or if it is concentrated in the wrong region, then its influence on the future of the war will be very greatly diminished and everything will go awry. The statement made in Europe with every appearance of authority that some of the American troops would be sent to Italy, some to Russia, and some even to Turkey seems to have been an astute invention of the enemy; but it may be reiterated that the war is to be won in none of these directions, and if these were to be their true destinations then the American troops had better stay at home. But if America is alive to the insidious suggestions of the foe working through hidden channels she may not be prepared to resist the blandishments of her friends. A great effort will be made to associate the American army with the British, and to induce the American Government to order its concentration near that apex of Flemish territory on the northwestern front where the British army has stood from the beginning.

The objections to that course are two-fold. The lesser of the two objections is that if this plan were adopted the American army would find itself committed to the continuance of the frontal attack and trench warfare that has gone on for three years. The Germans would thus have to be expelled from their strongest and best prepared positions. This would mean a protracted and most costly campaign or series of campaigns with the attendant condition that Belgium would remain the scene of the slaughter and destruction for an indefinite period and with the probable result of her complete obliteration. For a long time past prominent Germans have been boasting, and extolling the wisdom of their High Command thereupon, that Germany herself has been saved from the horrors of war, and that all the fighting and devastation have occurred on what is called conquered territory. If the American army joins, or is tacked on to the British army, this process must continue. The fighting will be in Belgium, the army will have to hack and hew its

way through seven lines of steel and concrete between the advance line in Flanders and the rear line in the Liège country, and as this could only be accomplished at immense loss it is more than probable that when the German frontier was reached the victorious armies would be in no state to prosecute the war in Germany with the necessary vigor and to retaliate for the wrongs and outrages that demand atonement. In plain words, it would be unwise to attack the enemy where he is strongest and best prepared, and in a region where the effects of victory would be least because the Belgians have been brought too low by want and suffering to do anything on their own account and also because the German people would themselves continue to be immune from the direct sufferings of war.

But the second objection is one of even greater force. It may be the effect of three years' strain, or of the languor of mental inertia arising from trench warfare, or merely of a moral relapse which eliminates hate, one of the most vital elements in sustaining human character; but whatever the cause this war has been carried on by the British Government with a tenderness for a detestable and brutal enemy that is past comprehension. There must be a reason for this, and the only one I can conceive is that while Germany represents in one aspect an enemy it is identified in another with Institutions which it is desired to preserve. The pro-German sentiment confronts one at every turn, not alone in England, but at the front where incidents with regard to prisoners, sparing the enemy from his deserts, and conducting the operations in a Quixotic spirit of forbearance are so numerous that I could fill any single issue of the *REVIEW* with their recital—and it is impossible therefore to resist the conclusion that a war thus prosecuted might never finish, or only conclude when the soldiers and the nations behind them refused to go on fighting any longer.

Let me give one glaring instance of this mysterious and extraordinary spirit of forbearance. All the German main communications with Belgium, and the part of the Western Front based thereon, must pass over the Viaduct of Grands Prés just to the west of Dolhain, and through the short tunnel of Dolhain itself. In three years not a single attempt has been made to destroy that viaduct or to block that tunnel. The localities are well known. Why has this vital point never been attacked, why has this all-

important link never been broken? A similar question might be asked with regard to many other vulnerable and tempting objects, but it is needless to particularize and the most striking case has been given. It all forms part of the unintelligible reluctance, shown from the very beginning of the struggle, to utilize Belgian resources for the deliverance of that country under the excuse that we did not wish to further injure it; and now after three years' waiting we are striving to hack and hew a way through that country by frontal attack to which we give the high name of strategy! If the struggle between Kaiserism and Democracy for the premier place in capacity to carry on war wisely and successfully were left to Germany and Britain, there can be no question that Kaiserism has won. It is for the United States to wrest the laurels from the hands of the autocrat and to prove that a Democracy can lead with the head as well as provide the force of arms in the mass.

Fortunately for a happy choice in deciding where and how the immense power of America may be employed to the best advantage of the common cause, there is another country in the Alliance that does not share the illusions of Great Britain about Germany and that is convinced that no victory will be conclusive that does not mete out to her the suffering she has inflicted on others or impose the punishment that is her due. France has felt the heavy hoof of the invader. Many of her beautiful cities, the greater part of the industrial region, have been pillaged and destroyed. The inhabitants of those departments and districts have been outraged not merely brutally in the first inroad but continuously with devilish ingenuity during three long years of occupation. In common with the Belgians, the French have felt the iron enter into their souls. It is no use expecting the people of England to have these feelings. They could only share them if they had suffered likewise, and for this war at least they have been spared the horrors of invasion, an immunity which they owe to Belgium and France, and not to themselves. If America wants to understand this war and its reality she must go straight to France and study them in the desolate fields and destroyed villages of Picardy, Champagne and Lorraine. There she will find not only the truth about this life and death struggle, but she will learn wisdom from men who see what has to be done, but who have not the means to give effect to their judgment for one reason

only—deficiency of man power. They will not induce the American leaders to give their attention to and to waste their strength on side issues. There is only one thing to be done and that is to drive the Germans across the Rhine. Nothing else matters, nothing else will count. In France, not in the little corner of Artois and Flanders with its network of canals and rivers fettering free movement and rapid progress where the British have been doing their useful work of stonewalling, but in the open regions of Champagne and Lorraine that intervene between Chalons and the weak points of the German position, the truth is to be learned, and with the study of the problem from a fresh point of view the real goal of the struggle will become clearly visible, and the secret of decisive victory may be quickly discovered.

But a war such as the present is not to be won solely by material means. The spirit in which it is conducted counts for as much as the enumeration of batteries and battalions. The Germans since they burst into Belgium have committed every crime in the calendar, but great and numerous as are these crimes they will be surpassed by others still to be committed as they reluctantly retire baffled from the prey in which their claws have been so long fixed—unless the fear of God has been put into their souls by the presence of victorious forces in their rear on German soil. These can only be composed in the main of the French army, but to enable it to accomplish this task it has need of at least a million American comrades. Brilliant victories and rapid progress attend such a combination which will shine in striking contrast with the slow and exhaustive process of trench warfare that has sterilized the intellect and destroyed the imagination of those who have so long participated in it.

DEMETRIUS BOULGER.